



## Digging the Digital Research: Using

# Diigo

## to See Out of My World

By Leslie Whidden



My job as a high school information professional (Hip TL) is to find methods of making information searching as efficient and productive as possible. This means investigating current trends as well as teaching traditional methods of information seeking and evaluation.

This past summer I began using a new-to-me tool for my internet research: Diigo (pronounced DEE-go). This free social networking tool has transformed my searches from uphill battles to bonanzas! Diigo is a powerful tool for internet research, and it also teaches basic web 2.0 skills and terminology common to other social networking tools.

In a nutshell, Diigo is a social bookmarking and annotation tool: social because the users of Diigo generally make their libraries of bookmarked sites public (that is, open to all users) so you can piggyback on the research results of others. So, for example, if 39 other researchers have previously bookmarked and tagged the site you've just saved, then they probably share your interests. You are then allowed to peruse the bookmark collections of these 39 other users and bookmark other URLs they have tagged and saved in that same vein of interest.

Social networking applications such as Facebook and MSN

are the culture of students, which allows them an easy transition into using other social networking tools such as Diigo. I need to teach effective research skills for the media that students are using, not just the media that I grew up with.

I teach students to use Diigo to accumulate, organize, and share digital resources. I also teach them to apply the same critical thinking skills for digital resources as print resources: evaluation and judgment.

At an introductory level, Diigo addresses two frustrations in building good online research results: first, finding good sites, and second, saving these sites for easy retrieval later on.

### Finding Good Sites

It's a difficult process to hone in on the right keywords needed to find relevant information, and especially frustrating for adolescents who have little patience and perseverance. Diigo users tag their sites with descriptive words that are personally meaningful. These tags link to other users who have tagged using the same descriptive language. These other users have the potential to become gold mines of research information for the student researcher. Tagging is in itself good practice in learning how to



find useful keywords. Students will still need to apply the skills to evaluate the credibility of the information, but that's another lesson.

## Saving the Sites for Easy Retrieval

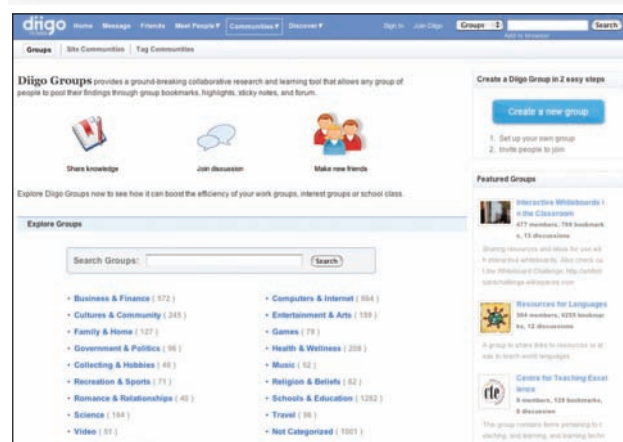
Users bookmark (save to favourites) the site to Diigo, which is internet-accessible from any computer. All search engines allow bookmarking, but the problem is that the bookmarks are available only on the actual computer you used, so your bookmarks are not available when you are using other computers. This is a problem for students going back and forth between home and school computers. Also, some networked school computers don't allow you to save bookmarks at all. So, saving bookmarked sites to Diigo gives you access to your personal bookmark library from any computer, any time.

At an intermediate level, Diigo promotes "individual collaboration." Diigo gives the user tools to highlight text and add comments. You choose whether you want your comments to be private or public. Comments, which appear as yellow sticky notes, become visible as the cursor runs over top of highlighted text and disappear as the cursor passes. How does this benefit the student or teacher? In the same way we use sticky notes in an essay or book: to make connections, choose good passages, ask questions. It is your choice to make your highlights and notes private or public. Making your comments public allows internet readers to add their comments and responses to a conversation thread, with speakers identifiable by user name.

The highest degree of complexity is in the Group structure. In a school setting, teachers can open a Diigo Educator Account and invite students to join. The teacher chooses the articles to be read and determines student requirements. Students can be instructed to highlight and comment on the articles, discuss, ask questions, and link to other websites. When designated "private," all group activity remains visible and accessible to invited group members only: comments visible on an article within the group are invisible to the public looking at the same article. Teachers can monitor student involvement by watching the quantity and quality of the online interaction of each student.

At the time of this article, my active group is Library 2.0. In it we discuss the direction that library practice is taking in the digital age and how it impacts our practice in high school libraries. There is a wealth of information to be gathered online from professional librarian bloggers and Twitterers. Diigo Groups allows us to park the information that we find individually and return to it later to discuss as a group. One of the useful features of Diigo—one that is common with most social networking apps—is the "similar searches" feature. Related Groups on Diigo will link the reader to other groups with similar interests to your group. Link your findings on Twitter with your Diigo group and you're working in real time.

Everything you need to know to get started with Diigo can be



found by connecting to [diigo.com](http://diigo.com). Diigo helps teach students learn 21st-century skills and is a great resource for collaborative research.

### Article on Diigo

[www.amphi.com/~technology/techtalks/online/nov08/bestpract.htm](http://www.amphi.com/~technology/techtalks/online/nov08/bestpract.htm)

### Help Outline

[help.diigo.com](http://help.diigo.com)

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